

Testimony Supporting

H.B. No. 6633: An Act Concerning a Needs Assessment and Fair Share Plans for Municipalities to Increase Affordable Housing.

Joint Committee on Housing

February 28, 2023

Dear Senator Moore, Representative Luxenberg, Senator Lesser, Representative Khan, Senator Sampson, Representative Scott, and esteemed members of the Housing Committee:

My name is Samaila Adelaiye, and I am submitting testimony today on behalf of Connecticut Voices for Children, a research-based advocacy organization working to ensure that one day Connecticut will be a thriving and equitable state where all children achieve their full potential.

Connecticut Voices for Children is testifying in support of H.B. No. 6633: An Act Concerning a Needs Assessment and Fair Share Plans for Municipalities to Increase Affordable Housing.

The shortage of affordable housing has resulted in high housing costs, which renders housing in Connecticut prohibitively expensive for low and middle-income households. The limited housing stock leads to higher demand for homes and increases in home prices, forcing many into houselessness, unaffordable housing, and unsafe homes.ⁱ This issue further exacerbates the discriminatory policies and practices that have made Connecticut one of the nation's most segregated and unequal states.

In 2022, we wrote about the affordable housing shortage in the state and highlighted how it disproportionately affects low and middle-income families and households of color.ⁱⁱ The National Equity Atlas estimates that in Connecticut, 15 percent of renter households were behind on rent at the end of 2022.ⁱⁱⁱ They found that 85 percent of such households were low-income, 61 percent were people of color, and 59 percent were households with children.^{iv}

All communities, not just a handful, across the state, must work towards solving the problem that keeps many families from securing safe and affordable housing. It is estimated that Connecticut needs to build 137,304 affordable housing units to keep up with demand.^v Finding housing that would cost less than 30 percent of household income is even more difficult for extremely low-income households. The National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) estimates that Connecticut needs 85,403 more rental units to be affordable to extremely low-income households.^{vi}

“Fair share” aims to improve housing availability for low- and middle-income families, enabling them to live in any town across the state rather than being limited to a few densely populated cities, inner-ring suburbs, and rural areas. If every town in Connecticut fulfills its responsibility to plan and zone for its fair share of affordable housing, working and middle-income residents will have many more options. For too long, there have been failures in ensuring that a range of individuals, from teachers and construction workers to cashiers and firefighters, can afford to

reside in the majority of towns within our state. This bill will create a process that promotes the building of affordable housing for low- and middle-income families in every town across our great state.

When compared to the United States as a whole, Connecticut has a high percentage of households that are housing cost-burdened, and this is disproportionately prevalent among lower-income families and families of color. As per the 2021 American Community Survey (ACS), 35 percent of all Connecticut residents spend 30 percent or more of their income on housing, while 52 percent of renters pay 30 percent or more on housing. Increasing the number of affordable housing units has various benefits, including improving the quality of life for low- and middle-income households, encouraging local economic growth, and decreasing public costs, all of which ultimately benefit the economy.

In addition to enhancing housing affordability, a fair share policy would positively affect economic growth and job creation, which has been a focus for Connecticut policymakers for many years. Research by the Open Communities Alliance estimates that enacting this bill would create approximately 80,000 jobs and generate \$12.2 billion in state and local tax revenue over the next decade.^{vii} High housing costs also make it challenging for businesses to attract and keep employees. However, a variety of affordable housing options, created in part through fair share, can not only enable stability for families to find economic security, but it will also help the state save money on homelessness supports and other housing-related social services in the long term, making communities more attractive to companies and workers.^{viii}

Passing this bill will ensure that steps are taken to set all municipalities on a path to creating affordable housing options for various income brackets. The diversity of housing options that will grow out of a fair share system will promote economic growth, diversity in our community, and more equitable opportunities for families to thrive and find security in housing.

Connecticut Voices for Children urges the committee to pass H.B. No. 6633: An Act Concerning a Needs Assessment and Fair Share Plans for Municipalities to Increase Affordable Housing.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Samaila Adelaiye, Ph.D.
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Connecticut Voices for Children

ⁱ Vanessa Calder (October 2017) Zoning, Land-Use Planning, and Housing Affordability. *Cato Institute*. <https://www.cato.org/policy-analysis/zoning-land-useplanning-housing-affordability>.

ⁱⁱ See O'Brien, Patrick R. et al (2022). 2022 Candidate Briefing Book. *Connecticut Voices for Children*. https://ctvoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/CT-Voices-2022-CBB_Final.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ PolicyLink and the USC Equity Research Institute; National Equity Atlas, www.nationalequityatlas.org, 2020. <https://nationalequityatlas.org/rent-debt>

^{iv} PolicyLink and the USC Equity Research Institute; National Equity Atlas, www.nationalequityatlas.org, 2020.
<https://nationalequityatlas.org/rent-debt>

^v Kinsey, D. (2020, November). Fair Share Housing Model for Connecticut, 2020 [PDF file]. *Open Communities Alliance*. [https://northwesthillscog.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/OCA -
Fair Share Housing Model for CT Nov 2020.pdf](https://northwesthillscog.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/OCA_-_Fair_Share_Housing_Model_for_CT_Nov_2020.pdf)

^{vi} NLIHC (2022). 2022 Connecticut Housing Profile. National Low Income Housing Coalition.
https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/SHP_CT.pdf

^{vii} Open Communities Alliance. (2020). HR 6611: Fair Share Zoning: The Right Thing to Do - and the Smart Thing to Do [PDF file]. Retrieved from
[https://d3n8a8pro7vnmx.cloudfront.net/opencommunitiesalliance/pages/763/attachments/original/1615398227/
HB_66_11_-_Fair_Share_Zoning_-_Right_Thing-Smart_Thing-2-25-2021.pdf?1615398227](https://d3n8a8pro7vnmx.cloudfront.net/opencommunitiesalliance/pages/763/attachments/original/1615398227/HB_66_11_-_Fair_Share_Zoning_-_Right_Thing-Smart_Thing-2-25-2021.pdf?1615398227)

^{viii} Open Communities Alliance. (2020). HR 6611: Fair Share Zoning: The Right Thing to Do - and the Smart Thing to Do [PDF file]. Retrieved from
[https://d3n8a8pro7vnmx.cloudfront.net/opencommunitiesalliance/pages/763/attachments/original/1615398227/
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